



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Recreation Commission Minutes 11/18/2008

Park and Recreation Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, November 18, 2008
Approved

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7:00 PM on the first floor of the Arlington Senior Center on Tuesday, November 18, 2008.

Members in attendance included: Leslie Mayer, Nancy Campbell, Jim Robillard, and Jen Rothenberg. Also in attendance was Director of Recreation Joseph Connelly.

Members of the public included: Andrew Leonard, Judy Weinberg, and Jim McLaughlin

Approval of Minutes

The Park and Recreation Commission reviewed the minutes of October 14, 2008. Ms. Campbell motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Robillard, motion was approved 4-0.

McClennen Park Turnover Issues/Concerns

Mr. Connelly reviewed the Commission's concerns of the complex and respective responses from Mr. Kevin O'Brien, Director of Planning. The Commission discussed their disappointment with some of the responses and asked Mr. Connelly to set up a staff meeting with both Planning and the Department of Public Works.

Ms. Mayer inquired to why the baseball field was locked and a sign posted saying "closed per order of the Park and Recreation Commission". Mr. Connelly stated that DPW closed the field after renovation of the pitchers mound. Ms. Mayer asked the sign then read closed per order of DPW. Ms. Mayer stated that the Park Commission has no current jurisdiction over the park.

Leonard Design – Feasibility Study Review

Mr. Leonard reviewed the results of his capital feasibility study. The study included: Wellington Park, Spy Pond Tennis Courts, Spy Pond Playground Surfacing, Hibbert Playground, North Union Basketball and Spray Pool, Florence Playground, Turkey Hill, Bishop School Playground and the Peirce School Playground.

Mr. Leonard stated that the base cost of most raw materials have increased dramatically including concrete and steel. Mr. Leonard also stated that the disposal cost for bituminous material has increased significantly.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the following:

WELLINGTON PARK/GROVE STREET TENNIS COURTS

The existing site at Wellington Park/Grove Street Tennis Courts contains 5 tennis courts in deteriorating condition, several unrelated pieces of play equipment, including swings, none of which meet current safety codes for equipment or play surfacing, a recently installed adventure/ropes course in the area behind the tennis courts, and an undeveloped natural area to the rear of the site.

Providing a potential site amenity, the Mill Brook runs along the northern boundary of the area. The main site access is from Grove Street, and parking is available on the street and in the DPW lot across the street. Existing brick piers provide an interesting entrance statement.

The redevelopment of Wellington Park and the Grove Street Tennis Courts consists of three portions: The tennis courts, the playground area and the natural area.

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the tennis courts would be completely rebuilt, essentially in the same location as they exist at present. The front three courts are graded incorrectly, as they drain from the baseline to the net area. Also, the pattern of the cracking on the courts indicates that the condition of the sub base and under drainage of the courts needs to be addressed to avoid this situation in the future. The court renovation assumes a basic bituminous concrete hard court with a color coat surface, 10' black vinyl-clad chain link fencing, and new team benches. A practice wall for these courts is not included; if one is desired, the typical cost can be found in the Spy Pond estimate.

The playground area has been treated as a typical neighborhood-level playground. In keeping with the town's recent approach, it is assumed that the playground would contain separate play structures for youth and small children, and an area for swings. Site furnishings, pathways, ornamental fencing at the street and landscaping have been included as well. The cost for a rubberized asphalt play surface is carried, while providing an alternate for wood fiber.

The natural area is somewhat undefined as to scope. In order to establish a budget, included are allowances for clean-up, removal of invasive species, creation of a path from the street to the back of the park where there is an interesting bridge over the creek, and for some work along the creek, to open it up to viewing from the park area. Further investigation is needed to more firmly define the potential scope of work for development of this area.

SPY POND TENNIS COURTS/SPY POND PARK PLAYGROUND

The Tennis Courts at Spy Pond, adjacent to the Boys and Girls club, consist of four hard surface tennis courts. The existing court surface has been repaired several times. While the overall grading of the courts is adequate, there has been some settling of the sub base, resulting in 'bird-baths' after rain events. There is also a wooden practice wall located within one of the courts.

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the tennis courts would be completely rebuilt, essentially in the same location as they exist at present. The court renovation assumes a basic bituminous concrete hard court with a color coat surface, 10' black vinyl-clad chain link fencing, and new team benches. A new, concrete masonry practice wall has been included. A new survey to guide design of the final grading is needed.

The Spy Pond Park Playground area has an existing sand surface. The budget suggested for this area assumes removal of the existing sand play surface, and replacement of the sand with rubberized asphalt play surface. An alternate is included for wood fiber play surface. In both alternates, a sand play area is retained (existing seated scoop play element). This project would not require new survey information.

HIBBERT PLAYGROUND

Hibbert Playground, located on Hibbert Street in the western part of Arlington, is a neighborhood park, similar to Waldo, Cutter or Locke in that it is not associated with a school, does not contain play fields, and is rather small in area. However, it offers great potential to become an enhanced neighborhood amenity.

The existing park, about .4 acres in size, contains paved paths, benches, a sand area with a set of swings, and several swings and other pieces of out-dated play equipment located on grass and dirt. The site is enclosed by chain link fencing of several sizes ranging from 3' along the street to 6' and 8' fencing along the back and sides. The back of the park, while currently fenced, abuts a private way. There are numerous shade and ornamental trees and other vegetation within the park.

In preparing the budget estimated, the playground area has been treated as a typical smaller neighborhood-level playground. In keeping with the town's recent approach, it is assumed that the playground would contain separate play structures for youth and small children, and an area for swings. These play areas would either work around the existing trees or include the trees within the play area. Line items are included for site furnishings, and a pathway around the interior of the playground, as well as for replacing the existing fencing with new vinyl-coated chain link fencing. As with the other playgrounds, cost is carried for the rubberized asphalt play surface, while providing an alternate for wood fiber.

The number of existing trees makes this playground somewhat unique. Therefore, larger amounts for landscaping have been included, especially considering the size of this playground, to allow for remedial work on the trees and enhancement of the existing plantings.

NORTH UNION PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL AND SPRAY POOL

North Union Playground, adjacent to the Thompson Elementary School, contains a baseball field and softball field, which overlap, a playground, seating area, basketball courts and a hard surface play area, which also contains water spray pool elements.

The basketball court has a deteriorated surface and antiquated backboards. The spray pool area, while partially functional, needs

rehabilitation.

The budget for this project assumes that the basketball court would be completely rebuilt, with new bituminous concrete surface with color coating, backboards, and benches. Also included is an allowance to install new lights on the existing wooden poles.

In order to function as a hard surface play area, the water play elements of the spray pool area need to either be located along the edges of the play zone, or be flush with the asphalt surface. The budget for the renovation of this area includes new water play elements similar in area and size to the existing elements, as well as new piping and controls. The bituminous concrete surface would be repaired after the installation, rather than completely repaved. A color-coat surface for the entire hard surface play area is included, as well. An alternate is provided should a rubberized asphalt surface be desired at the spray pool area. The alternate includes an allowance for demolition of the existing bituminous surface at the spray pool area.

ROBBINS FARM PARK

Robbins Farm Park is a major town facility, containing sports fields, a large playground area, two well-used sled hills, passive recreation areas, and beautiful views of the Boston City skyline. This study was asked to focus on two areas for renovation, the baseball/sports field area and the old basketball court area. In addition, a cost is sought to replace the existing 'alpine' slide at the playground, as the existing installation has not proved to be durable.

The baseball field/sports field area is a good candidate for renovation. There is adequate slope across the area, in the proper orientation for good drainage. The baseball field is large enough for babe-ruth and junior high school baseball, but probably not for varsity or adult baseball due to a short right field. The outfield area is large enough for a 100 x 50 soccer field, also junior high or lower club level, or two 6 on 6 fields. The existing baseball backstop is mounted on a concrete retaining wall, and is deteriorated and should be replaced. The existing basketball area is composed of deteriorated bituminous concrete and is unusable.

The budget for the baseball/sports field area assumes that the existing baseball diamond would be removed, all sod and topsoil stripped and the sub base regraded. The topsoil would be screened and augmented for reuse. A new baseball infield would be constructed, with new backstop and team benches. The outfield would be reinstalled with sod, and an irrigation system provided for the entire sports field area. A bleacher is included, to be installed on the north edge of the area.

The basketball court would be completely rebuilt, with new bituminous concrete surface with color coating, backboards, and benches. If desired, it would be possible to grade the basketball court so it could be flooded in the wintertime for skating, if desired. This would require a drain in the center of the court that could be covered to allow for flooding.

The budget for the Alpine Slide at the playground area assumes that the slide would be replaced in essentially the same configuration as at present. The existing stairs, etc., would remain. The town could consider replacing one of the slides with a curved, rather than straight slide, but this would require reconfiguring one of the access stairs, and would necessitate correspondingly larger budget.

FLORENCE AVENUE/DALLIN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The Florence Avenue Playground, located adjacent to the Dallin School serves both the school population and the surrounding neighborhood. It consists of two major elements, both located along Florence Avenue. The first is a larger, rather linear play area, closer to the school, containing play elements appropriate to school age children. The major play structure is relatively new and in good shape. The second area is a smaller play area intended for young children, located away from the school and in a grove of pine trees.

The budget for this area assumes that the existing major play structure would be retained, and added onto in a manner similar to the recently completed Pheasant Avenue Playground. Due to the proximity of the sports field area only a small area for expansion is available. Line items are included for site furnishings, new pathways, as well as for replacing the existing fencing with new vinyl-coated chain link fencing. Cost is carried for a rubberized asphalt play surface, while providing an alternate for wood fiber.

The tot area renovation includes a new play structure, as the existing equipment is outdated. Line items are included for site furnishings and new pathways. As with the youth area, cost is carried for a rubberized asphalt play surface, while providing an alternate for wood fiber.

TURKEY HILL RESERVATION

Turkey Hill reservation is a 10 acre, largely wooded open space located in the NW part of Arlington. It contains a water tank facility and driveway. Vehicular access is only via Dodge Street, a minor residential street. There is undeveloped frontage on Gay Street, another minor residential street. The parks' natural wooded character, rock outcroppings and potential views offer great potential for a unique open space in Arlington.

The proposed program for the park assumes development of a passive recreation nature, similar to the trail system developed in the Middlesex Fells Reservation. Envisioned is a narrow, rustic pathway that will circle the park, below the hill top (which is occupied by the water tower). Several seating areas, consisting of cleared areas with log benches would be located along the path at key viewpoints. The path would connect to the local streets at the entrance to the area at Dodge Street and at Gay Street. Such a path would not be 'accessible' by handicap access standards. It would be possible to develop a seating area off of the existing driveway around the water tower that would be accessible. The budget also contains allowances for cleanup of trash and debris and grading and erosion

control where required along the pathway.

It is recommended that an amount of the budget be reserved to return to the park in the subsequent seasons after installation to correct areas of erosion that may arise. While some of the places where check dams, etc., should be installed will be obvious, others will only become apparent after development and a couple of seasons of use.

It should be noted that the cost of developing this area could vary greatly depending on the proposed scope of the work. It may be possible to involve volunteers to do much of this work. The Friends of the Middlesex Fells may be a possible resource for trail building and maintenance with volunteers.

BISHOP SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The Bishop School Playground serves both the school population and the surrounding neighborhood. There are two playground areas, as well as a softball/little league baseball diamond and play field area. The larger of the two play areas consists of a cable climbing structure, individual play elements and swings. Most of these were installed and renovated last year. The smaller play area contains a play structure installed about 10 years ago, and a set of swings. The play structure is in decent shape. The safety zone around the swings does not meet current safety codes.

The budget for this area assumes that the smaller, red play structure would be retained. The play area would be expanded so that a couple of individual play elements for smaller children could be added and the swings re-oriented for safety. Due to the proximity of the sports field area only a small area for expansion is available. Line items are included for site furnishings and a new pathway. Cost is carried for a rubberized asphalt play surface, while providing an alternate for wood fiber.

A cost is provided should it be desired to convert the existing fiber play surface at the large play area to rubber.

PEIRCE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The Peirce School Playground was recently completely reconstructed following the rebuilding of the Peirce School. Two areas have become degraded or eroded due to overuse by the school population, as the playground is small and is heavily used.

The area adjacent to the hard court play area is eroding onto the hard court surface. The area is on the North side of the school building and is additionally shaded by adjacent trees. It is recommended to install a retaining wall, similar to the one recently installed at the Pheasant Avenue Playground, to reduce the steepness of the slope. The slope above the retaining wall would then be planted with durable shrub material.

The level grass play area has been almost completely beaten to a dirt surface due to overuse. Since this is such a small area (about 7,000 s.f.) it is recommended that the grass area be replaced with an artificial turf surface similar to the new field at the high school. An alternate is provided for sod, instead of artificial turf. If sod is desired, an irrigation system is recommended to extend the life of the grass surface. Even so, periodic replacement of the sod surface, perhaps even yearly, will probably be required due to the heavy use.

Additional amounts have been allocated to repair sod in the sloped grass areas, install paving at the benches where the surface is eroding, provide mats for the swings at the fiber play surface, and install an irrigation system for the remaining grass area, should it be desired.

The Commission asked Mr. Leonard to revise his scope and cost based on the Commission's feedback for North Union Playground (Rubber Surface), Peirce Playground (Natural Turf Option) and Turkey Hill (Simplified Project)

Mr. Connelly stated that he would try to contact former DPW Director Rich Bento with regards to a well at Robbins Farm.

Mr. Leonard also reviewed the draft schematics of the flagpole at Summer Street Field. Mr. Leonard will price out the behind the backstop option. Mr. Leonard explained that placement at the top of the hill did not make sense due to the overhead utilities.

The Commission discussed the naming of the complex to the "Veterans' Memorial Sports Complex". Ms. Mayer and the Commission were disappointed that the Park Commission was not consulted ahead of time. Ms. Mayer will draft a letter from the Commission to the Board of Selectmen looking for clarification regarding the naming process.

Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park Discussion

The new president of the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, Judy Weinberg, discussed the new vision of the Friends and their upcoming brainstorming sessions. Ms. Mayer and Mr. Connelly discussed the proper communication protocol for special events, clean-ups and park activities..

Rink/Recreation Update

Recreation –Mr. Connelly stated that the fall program registrations are up from last year with a particular increase in the tennis programs. Mr. Connelly reviewed the low numbers for in house ice skating classes and discussed some possible future changes.

Rink – Mr. Connelly stated that the Recreation Department would be running the high school jamboree. Mr. Connelly discussed the transition of the event from the hockey club to the Recreation Department.

Special Events

Jim McLaughlin – Softball Tournament – July 24-26 – Peirce Softball, Buzzell and Bishop

Mr. McLaughlin reviewed the tournament stating that the appropriate insurance would be acquired and food permits would be obtained. The Commission discussed the portable restrooms issue. Mr. Connelly will let Mr. McLaughlin know where the issue stands as the event approaches. Mr. Connelly stated that the adjacent schools could be opened up at Bishop and the high school. Ms. Mayer stated that no grilling would be allowed at Buzzell Field but permission may be granted to use the concession stand by the high school. Mr. Connelly stated that the scheduling should not be a problem during those dates. Mr. Connelly will make the youth leagues aware of those dates early enough so that other field arrangements can be made if necessary.

Mr. Robillard made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Campbell and approved 4-0.

Capital Update

Arlington Sport Complex – Mr. Connelly reviewed the public meeting held on October 30th. Mr. Connelly stated that the intent of the meeting was to begin the public input process so that the feasibility study could move forward. Mr. Connelly stated that some good feedback was obtained and that Ms. Mayer and himself met with Sasaki to review the feedback and to clarify how to move forward with the study.

Buzzell Field –Mr. Connelly stated that the project was completed and that the contractor would be removing the fence after Thanksgiving. Mr. Connelly also stated that the contractor would be back in the early spring for an additional weed and feed treatment.

Thorndike Parking –Mr. Connelly stated that the survey was almost complete the next phase was for Warner Associates to develop plan details and cost estimates prior to the December 2nd public hearing. Mr. Connelly stated that the goal was to narrow the plan to a single option before beginning the special permit process through the Redevelopment Board. Mr. Connelly explained that some of the wetland flagging and test pits were still being worked on.

Pheasant Ave. – Mr. Connelly stated that the playground was 99.9 % completed and the remaining item to be fixed was the step handrails.

Menotomy Rocks – Mr. Connelly stated that the project was completed.

Handicap Access – Ms. Mayer stated that the Board of Selectmen reviewed her letter and approved action with input from public safety.

Committee Updates

Green Dog Committee – Ms. Mayer reviewed the first of the second round of public hearings and explained that two additional meetings would be taking place prior to a series of meetings to refine the current policy.

Restrooms in Parks Committee – Ms. Rothenberg stated that this group would be meeting with the Friends of Parks group.

Open Space – Ms. Mayer stated that the grant for assistance with the Mill Brook Linear Park was not approved.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Campbell and approved 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:45 PM.

Respectively Submitted:

Joseph Connelly, Director of Recreation